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Detroit NAACP Supports Mayoral Management and Control of the City's Water/Sewerage Department

Today's announcement by emergency manager Kevin Orr that Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan will regain management and control of Detroit's Water/Sewerage Department, is indeed most appropriate and overdue. The recent mass shutoffs of water in the city of Detroit on residents without proper notice, without regard to financial consideration, or health concerns, was insensitive and ill-timed and needs to be reconsidered. We hope that this move is an indication that democracy is rapidly returning to the city of Detroit. It must be indicated that the voices of descent, the critical reviews, the community meetings, and the international outrage over this condition, have all played a part in arriving at this moment. It is now time to structure a plan and a strategy that will allow people to be educated on the issues of changes in the Water Department, programs available to assist for special financial needs, and a more sensitive management style to interface with this community. The people cannot be turned on to celebrate a new Detroit while the water in Detroit is being turned off, which humiliates the people of Detroit.

We believe that people should in fact pay their water bills. We recognize that water must be processed and sewerage service must be provided. Yet, the high increase in costs over the last several years, as well as the restructuring in the calculations regarding costs for water and sewerage services, must be reviewed. The Detroit Branch NAACP will continue to offer any assistance, communication, and support in order to facilitate a much needed resolution to these issues. Among our suggestions are the following:

- 1) The establishment of a special core of Water Ambassadors to move throughout the community to help identify the customer base and the impact the shut-offs will have on individual residences. This would aide in the knowledge of putting faces and families behind the currently anonymous business addresses.
- 2) A reconsideration of the high cost now associated with drainage and runoff from rain and snow on properties that have asphalt. Particularly when these commercial developments are creating new opportunities, jobs, and eliminate blight inside our community. These new rates should be made going forward and should not have a retroactive penalty.

- 3) A series of community forums, at least four, to both educate and inform the community on alternatives and support to pay water and sewerage bills, as well as to develop the most effective efforts for water utilization and to eliminate any water waste or overuse. We would volunteer to host the first session here on the Northwest side of Detroit at Fellowship Chapel. I am certain that there are other locations that will also step up to accomplish this task.
- 4) Providing Water Ambassadors who work with churches and non-profits to educate and assist the community with payment and water usage. The NAACP (as just one location) would provide temporary space for such an ambassador to be located at our facility during certain hours of the day, where persons may even come in and make payments (by certified check or money order only, no cash, to the Water Department).
- 5) A 90-day moratorium on water shut offs until the forums have been held and the message of payment and support have been firmly established within the community.

We congratulate the Mayor and the Detroit City Council on continuously working together to move our city forward. Let us hope that the faucets will be turned back on!

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